

Let's Go To The Mall Everybody by BadHidingSpot

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Summary:

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Then it's familiar in the worst possible way.

Someone smacks him hard and mercilessly in the temple and it not only sends him off of Steve it makes him *dizzy*. Nancy Wheeler is standing over him her book bag still swinging in her arm. At least it wasn't a syringe this time.

"Stay down," She whispers, then, as an after thought she adds, "Bitch" and Billy has just got to hit her for that. He doesn't get the chance because Mr. Mundy steps in and breaks up the fight.

"Harrington! Hargrove!" He shouts. "What the hell is going on here?"

"He's starting shit, Mr. Mundy," Steve explains glaring at Billy. Billy can't help himself; he licks his bottom lip and tastes a little blood that Steve put there.

"Byers you too?"

"He just came at me Mr. Mundy," Billy lies, "He's being a creep."

"That's not what happened," Jonathan mutters.

"You four have detention. Saturday. All day detention."

Let's Go To The Mall Everybody

Author's Note:

Okay I swear I'm not gonna post another one in two more days. After this I'm out of fic ideas. Sort of.

EDIT: Because not all school experiences are universal I should make something clear: in my high school if you didn't show up, they DID send someone from the local sheriff's department to come get you. At the beginning of detention there would be a teacher and a deputy in the room. The teacher would call roll off of a list of names and addresses. If you didn't answer the teacher would hand the list to the deputy and he/she would go out and pick up the kids from their houses. If the kids were not at their listed addresses, the deputy would then be given a list of parent contact information and would then contact the parents to ask them where their child was. (There were rumors that if the parent didn't know the deputy would then ask to file a missing person's report because their child was not "where they were supposed to be" but it never escalated to this point for me so I'm not sure if that was true or just a threat to get cooperation.) A similar thing would happen if you were sick, the only way to keep the deputy from coming to get you after first period roll call was for your parents to call and confirm with the front office that you'd be out BEFORE first period ended. If you called, or your doctor, or anyone but the parent listed as the guardian in the office, they would send a deputy.

I didn't realize until much later in life that this was not a common occurrence across all public school systems. For the purposes of this fic though, Hawkins High operates inside the same kind of utilitarian nightmare that my HS did.

Billy had not taken much notice of Jonathan Byers other than to note he had the body of a hideous teen and the face of a dead fish that had “seen too much”. Billy had more important, prettier things, to focus on. When Byers snaked Nancy from Harrington Billy was even a little grateful to him. Almost sent him a fruit basket because it freed Steve up to be harrassed by Billy. Steve wasn’t glommed onto Wheeler twenty four seven or whining “I missed you” after only an hour. Billy made sure Steve wasn’t lonely. He was being generous even. Shoulder checking him in the hall, checking him out in the shower, teaching him to plant his feet on the court, and all kinds of subtle sensual little things several times a day, every school day.

Billy prefers Harrington when he’s alone. Billy can get away with more when Harrington’s alone. If Tommy had stuck around and seen how Billy was eye-fucking Steve during that “plenty of bitches in the sea thing” Billy would be outed as a “queer”. But because Steve was alone and terribly dense it meant that Billy could practically do or say anything he wanted and Harrington would just chalk it up to asshole-ery.

But then, after a while, Steve isn’t as alone as often. Billy notices that he starts eating lunch with Byers and Wheeler. Hangs out with them after school.

What’s worse, what pisses Billy off, is that Byers and Steve hang out even when Nancy isn’t around. So it can’t be that like, Harrington is trying to get Nancy back. They’re always talking real close. Drawing maps or some shit and speaking about “tactics” like they’re playing some intense video game Billy’s never heard of. Billy gets less and less time with Steve because Steve is almost never alone.

Then, Billy is checking himself out in the mirror of his locker. Giving himself a wink and turning the door to spy on Steve behind him. Except Steve is talking to Byers and facing away from him and Billy has to look at the back of Steve’s head or Byers’ hideous face. He watches them talk in hushed hurried tones. Steve is all concerned about something. Byers might also be concerned but Billy can’t tell because Byers literally *always* looks concerned. Then Steve does it.

He puts his hand on Byers’ shoulder and he gives it a squeeze. Billy slams his locker door shut and turns around to see Steve walking

away. Byers is fucking *smiling* and Billy is filled with rage.

Were they fucking? Is Nancy some kind of cover? What's Byers got that Billy hasn't? Other than a senior discount at the theater. This makes Billy mad. And when he gets mad he breaks things.

Billy shoves Byers into his own locker and Byers stumbles but catches himself. It's not the first time he's been shoved unawares.

"Watch it, Creep," Billy sneers standing near him but not close like he would with Steve.

"I was just standing here," Byers explains like maybe he thinks that Billy is mistaken.

"Yeah, and you got in my way. So stay out of my way."

Byers stares at him.

Byers shrugs. "Okay. Sorry." Byers then gestures in front of him like he wants Billy to go first so he really can stay out of his way.

Billy grabs him by the jacket and shoves him again, this time towards the ground. Byers falters but doesn't go down. He catches his balance. A crowd is gathering.

"What is your problem, man?" Byers whines out. Everything Byers says is a low whine and Billy wonders what Steve can fucking see in someone so pathetic.

"You're my problem." Another shove. "You're in my fucking way."

Honestly what does Steve even see in this guy? Billy doesn't mutter everything, doesn't hunch down as he talks. Billy owns the things he wants and the places he's in. And sure, Harrington thinks he's an asshole, all swaggering hips and teasing, but Billy always got the sense that Steve *liked* it. That he was bothered in a good way. Is Harrington seriously after some soft spoken mouse when a lion like Billy is around?

"Whatever," Byers picks up a book he dropped. *Cats Cradle*.

Billy smacks it to the ground and kicks it when Byers bends to pick it up. This is fucking ridiculous. Billy read *Cat's Cradle* in the seventh grade and Byers is only *just now* getting into it? Billy thought Steve liked smart guys.

"If you want a fight, you'll have to go somewhere else," Byers sighs. "I got other shit to do. I'm busy."

Yeah. Busy fucking around with Harrington.

Billy smirks. "Tell me something, Creep," Billy steps into Byers' space, "if you're a pussy and your girlfriend is a cunt does that make you a lesbian couple?"

Byers' fists clench. His jaw clenches. He raises a fist and-

"Woah there!" Steven Harrington sores in grabbing Byers' hand and spinning him a little. Spinning him away from Billy. Spinning him into a shoulder hug and walking him back.

"Hey Johnny, glad I found you," Steve says with frantic friendliness. Billy can only glare at Steve's arm wrapped comfortably on *Johnny's* shoulders. "I had a question for you," he's pulling Byers' away, removing him from Billy's taunting, "about photography. How does it work? Like how does a picture work?"

With jealousy pouring out from him, Billy grabs Steve's arm, the one locked around Byers' shoulders protectively, and yanks him back.

His fist collides with Harrington's pretty face and something feels warm, hard, and right about it. Billy has to smile, biting his tongue.

Steve Harrington is no "bigger man". He's a king and he rushes Billy, fists flying and Billy lets him get one on his jaw. Yeah. *This* is more like it. Just him and Harrington skin hitting skin at high velocity. That's the way Billy wants it.

Except Jonathan gets in the way again and he pulls Steve away and off of Billy.

"He's not worth it," Jonathan shouts.

Fuck you. I'll show you worth it.

Billy grabs Jonathan by the hair and slams his face into the lockers. There's an audience now hooping and hollering for blood and Billy throws his arms up in triumph like a gladiator-no. Wait.

He's the lion.

He bares his teeth at Steve and even gives him a growl.

Steve goes for another punch, so predictable, and Billy ducks out of it, then slams into Steve pushing him to the ground.

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"He just came at me Mr. Mundy," Billy lies, "He's being a creep."

"That's not what happened," Jonathan mutters.

"You four have detention. Saturday. All day detention."

"What? Mr. Mundy," Nancy whines stepping in and lowering her

book bag. She looks so sweet and innocent like she didn't just call Billy a 'bitch' a minute ago.

"I saw you, Nancy. You shouldn't have gotten involved. You should have gotten the principal. Nancy," Mr. Mundy tutts, "what if you had been hurt?"

Billy scoffs at that without any amusement. "What if *she* had been hurt?!" Billy yells. "She practically gave me brain damage!"

"I can't give you what you already have," Wheeler snaps back and Billy launches to his feet to go at her but Mr. Mundy is there to stop him. Jonathan and Steve step in front of her too forming a protective triangle. Billy thinks he probably wouldn't have really hit her anyway.

"Detention. Saturday." Mr. Mundy has the firm tone of a man who has waited his whole life to put kids in Saturday Detention. Like a gun nut just waiting for a burglar to pick their house to break into.

"Woah woah," Steve shuffles quickly forward, "not-not *this* Saturday, right?" Billy notes that Byers and Wheeler share a nervous and panicked look.

Mr. Mundy nods. "Yes. That's right."

"Mr. Mundy," Nancy puts on her biggest Bambi eyes and Billy rolls his, disgusted with her, "can't it be next Saturday? Or-or maybe you could split it up after school days during the week. Or--"

"I don't make deals with students," Mr. Mundy crosses his arms. "This Saturday."

The trifecta walk away first, together, in one group. Nancy and Byers lean into each other whispering and Steve glares at Billy. Billy hopes he's going to punch him again.

Instead he whispers "Fucking asshole" and walks after them.

*

Steve tries everything to get Mr. Mundy to let them take a different

day; literally any other day, but that Saturday. He offers to do two Saturdays in a row, three, four, the rest of the year just so long as it isn't *this* Saturday. Steve even has his dad make a phone call but none of it matters. Mr. Mundy won't budge.

Steve kicks Mike's tent fort in the Wheeler basement out of frustration as he explains all this to Nance and Johnny. Nancy is focused on the bomb, her hands steady and her eyes not leaving the wires for a second as she works. "Don't break my brother's stuff, please," She says distantly.

Jonathan is biting his thumb looking at the ground deep in thought. "This is fucking ridiculous," he grumbles. "The fucking town is at stake. We won't get another Saturday that the mall is deserted. This is our only shot."

"Fucking Hargrove," Steve sneers, "the fuck is his problem?"

"I don't know," Jonathan sighs, "he's crazy. I literally never spoke to him before. I don't think I've even looked at him."

Steve finds this a little hard to believe because, well, has Jonathan seen how Billy Hargrove walks into a room? You have to look if you have eyes.

"Maybe we should just skip?" Nancy suggests her delicate hands doing something dangerous and complex that Steve can't watch or he gets antsy.

"Not gonna work," Steve sighs. "I tried once. They send the cops to your house to pick you up. With Hopper out of commission we don't have any pull with the police. They'll track us down and drag us there."

"We can't exactly say we're closing a spider demon spawn nest in the basement of The Gap," Jonathan adds.

"We'll have to sneak out during," Nancy sets her tools down and stands. She rolls her shoulders, the close work making them tense and sore, and Jonathan is behind her in less than a second to rub it out for her. Steve is pacing the room.

"Yeah right. What? Just tell Mr. Mundy we all three simultaneously have to use the bathroom?"

Steve isn't sure Nancy heard him because she's giving a little moan to let Jonathan know that he's got the right spot. Steve plops down in the fort.

"Fucking Hargrove," he says again. "I shouldn't have hit him."

"None of us should have," Jonathan adds, "but it doesn't matter. We did."

Nancy pats Jonathan's hand to let him know he can stop. He sits down and she starts to pace the room. "We won't have to make an excuse," She explains talking kind of embarrassed, like she's a little ashamed of her own plan, "if he's passed out?"

"What do you mean?" Steve asks cocking his head to one side.

"I mean....you have that sleeping pill prescription don't you? Maybe, like, just a couple in his coffee first thing in the morning and then..."

Jonathan beams at her, laughs, his eyes glow when he sees Nancy come up with a brilliant idea.

"You want to drug the teacher?" He laughs.

"It's life or death," Nancy explains, "and it's not like it can really hurt him. He could probably use the nap."

"What about Hargrove?" Steve asks and he feels like, lately, he's always about two minutes away from asking something about Hargrove.

"Him too?" Jonathan suggests.

"Will he care? I mean, we go our way, he goes his," Nancy goes on, "surely he cares more about getting out of detention than following us around."

Jonathan glances at Steve and then back at Nancy. "Well maybe not following 'us'." He gestures between them and Steve isn't sure what

he means by that.

Nancy sighs. "Damn. You're right." She looks at Steve too. Before he can ask what this means she shrugs. "Well then him too. Somehow."

"Does he drink coffee?" Jonathan asks.

"Two sugars and half and half," Steve answers chewing on his thumb. "He took mine in the lunch line once. Took a sip and grimaced. Said I needed something milky and bitter in there."

"He what?" Nancy's jaw is on the floor and Steve shrugs.

"Yeah and then he said he likes it with half and half and, at most, two sugars."

She's still staring at him.

"What?"

She huffs and shrugs with her whole body. "Okay. Fine. Steve you bring the pills and I'll get the coffee and we'll dose them at the start of the day."

"How fast do the pills work?" Jonathan asks.

"If you aren't used to them?" Steve thinks. "One for Mundy and two for Hargrove. Billy's bigger so."

"Right," Nancy nods.

"Should be less than ten minutes."

"Perfect," She sighs looking at the bomb. "Then we're ready."

Steve doesn't exactly feel ready but Nancy and Jonathan share a look like they're always ready. They've done this more times than he has.

*

Billy is the last one to arrive. He doesn't know this from the parking lot because it's just Harrington's BMW parked next to Mr. Mundy's trashy Honda. He thinks he's going to get some free alone time with

Steve who's been sulking around him all week. He's taken to trying to ignore Billy which is pretty upsetting. Billy even tried to apologize he got so frustrated with Harrington's cold shoulder. Well he apologized in a Billy way. He put his arms around Harrington in the locker room and mussed his hair saying he was sorry to see Steve so pouty and he'd love to make it better if Steve would just tell him how.

Billy had been expecting at least a "fuck off" but Steve just glared, said nothing, and shuffled away.

Christ. What was it all of them *absolutely had to do* this Saturday? An orgy?

Billy realizes that he's actually the last to arrive. He can see through the detention room window from where he's parked the camaro. Nancy is chatting with Mr. Mundy. Handing him a thermos of something. Mr. Mundy is smiling pleasantly, he even laughs at something she says, and takes the thermos.

That's gross. But grosser than that is Steve and Byers huddled up together close by the window talking over one to-go cup of coffee. They're hiding it from Mundy. They're doing something with it.

Billy is pissed again. Enraged at the fucking *closeness* of Byers and Harrington.

Then he sees Steve drop two of something into the cup and seal it.

Neither of them drink and they don't hand it to Nancy. Steve keeps looking at the door and Billy realizes that Steve is checking for *Him*. That whatever he put in that cup was meant for Billy.

He gets out of his car and takes out his knife headed straight for the BMW.

Harrington is literally about to *drug* him.

Fucking Byers and Wheeler are trying to *ruin* his Saturday time with Harrington.

Well then he's going to ruin theirs.

It's not like Steve can't afford the repairs anyway.

*

When Billy saunters into the room he's grinning like the cat who got the cream. He goes straight to Steve, pushing Jonathan away and Jonathan steps off without any provocation.

"Look at you, Harrington, all dressed up for me."

Steve looks down at himself. He's wearing his basketball shirt and shoes with his most athletic jeans. He's probably going to be moving around a lot and he wanted to be prepared.

"Little early in the morning to be so giddy, Hargrove," He's tapping his finger on the rim of the coffee cup. Billy hasn't taken it yet. Billy is always quick to take drinks away from Steve. Billy seems to like the surprise on Steve's face when he takes his drinks, downs them, and leaves just the last little bit for Steve.

"What can I say? I just feel really *good* today. You know? I think we're going to have some real fun."

"Yeah sure," Steve scoffs, "so do I." He puts the coffee to his lips and pretends like he's about to take a drink. Billy *always* snags the cup when Steve is about to drink.

"Whoops," Billy says in an absolutely not "whoops" way as he just smacks the drink out of Steve's hand. It tumbles and spills all over the floor. Steve jumps back in time to keep too much of it from getting on him and Billy bites his tongue between his smile. "Sorry, Your Majesty. Did you need that?"

Steve is literally growling and he looks like he's about to punch Billy which Billy is so very ready for.

"Hargrove," Mundy shouts, "go to the janitor's closet and get a mop. Clean that up."

"It was an accident," Billy says with a shrug.

"I didn't ask if it was an accident."

"I'll clean it," Steve says ready to leave for the janitor's closet when Billy stops him with a warm hand on his chest.

"Oh I couldn't *possibly* let you do that your highness." Steve thinks he's just fucking with him but he actually does leave the room.

Steve relaxes. He'd been way too tense with Billy there.

Billy seems to be taking a long time when Steve thinks that he's probably just not coming back? Good. Problem solved. He hadn't brought any more sleeping pills with him and he wasn't sure he could get away to get another cup of coffee.

"What is taking," Mr. Mundy stands, falters, "him...so....ugh," He staggers back and Jonathan and Steve rush over to settle him quietly into his chair. He falls forward onto the desk. Nancy gets close to him and nods.

"He's out. We should go now."

"Right," Jonathan agrees and rushes to the window opening it and climbing out. He helps Nancy and then offers a hand to Steve.

Steve looks behind him.

"What about Hargrove?"

"He's gone. Let's go before he comes back," Jonathan replies. Steve nods and, not taking Jonathan's hand, climbs out the window.

They make their way to his BMW when Steve notices instantly what's wrong.

"Fuck!" He shouts running up to it. "Fuck, fuck, fuck!" He starts kicking his car.

"What?" Jonathan asks rushing over.

"My tires are slashed."

"What?" Nancy looks at them. "All of them?"

"Looks like. Fuck. How did this happen?"

There's a horn honking behind them and Billy is blasting his rock music from the stereo. He climbs out through his driver window. Rests on the inside of it and lays his hands over the roof. He's biting his tongue and wiggling his eyebrows oh-so-delighted with himself.

"What's up guys? Need a ride?"

*

Disappointingly it's Jonathan who comes after him. Nancy rushes in front to push him back and for a second Billy thinks he's going to just plow through her to get to Billy. But he stops.

"Do you know what you've done?" He screams at Billy. Billy is looking at Steve. Steve sneers and shakes his head. He gets into his busted up BMW and pulls out two duffle bags.

"Oh did you guys need the Beemer?" Billy teases. He takes a drag off his cigarette. "Next time you want to drug me, Harrington, all you have to do is ask."

"We don't have time for this," Nancy urges looking up into Jonathan's eyes. He relaxes but he's still glaring at Billy.

"We can maybe switch the tires," Steve suggests taking a crow bar and tool box out of his trunk, "Or just hotwire Mundy's?"

"Good thinking, your majesty," Billy winks at Steve and then tosses two long strips of rubber at his feet. "Unless these are important?"

"What are those?" Jonathan asks.

"Belts," Nancy spits. She looks up at Billy and this time she lunges for him and Jonathan has to hold her back. "You selfish asshole!"

Billy throws his head back and laughs. He flicks a cigarette at her. "Sorry to ruin your little date," Billy is so very clearly not sorry. "Where were you needing to go so bad anyway?"

"The mall," Steve sighs looking at the belts at his feet with absolute-

Sorrow?

Billy is kind of shocked. Steve looks like Billy just threw his childhood pet at his feet not car parts. Now that he looks at Byers and Wheeler their faces are kind of the same.

They're all looking like someone *died*.

"Jesus," Billy scoffs, "fucking fine. You guys need a ride to the mall?"

"Not from you," Jonathan snarls.

"Yes," Nancy interrupts him.

"What?" Steve comes forward, snapping out of his depressing trance. "He's not-Nance come on! He can't come!"

"We don't have a choice," she sighs, "we need to get there and we need a fast car to get away."

Billy slides himself out of his window and walks around to the other side to face them. He pats the camaro lovingly. "She's fast all right. Seats up to five too."

"Good," Nancy says and grabs a crow bar from one of the duffle bags. She tosses it at Billy who catches it easily. He looks at it a little confused. "Drive fast, hit hard, stay out of our way." She stomps to the camaro and opens the door. She climbs in the back and Jonathan goes in after her. Steve picks up the duffle bags and makes to get in when Billy shuts the passenger side door. Billy slides up close to Steve.

"Gonna spend Saturday with you after all, Harrington."

"Hargrove," Steve says darkly, "do not, I mean it, do *not fuck me on this*."

"Fine," Billy says opening the door for Steve and giving a little bow, "on something else then." He shuts the door for Steve and gets into the driver's seat. The camaro does take off fast enough that Steve flies back a little and hits his head on his seat. There's still tension in the car that Billy can't quite place but it doesn't seem like any of it is really directed at him.

*

The mall is deserted. Set to re-open in a few days after cleaning up what has been deemed a wild animal attack that was let loose in the mall as a prank. Or whatever false bullshit they're feeding to the news.

Nancy and Jonathan are curled into each other in the backseat whispering. Not that he would eavesdrop on it if he could, but Steve can't hear them because Billy is blasting The Scorpions from his stereo. He glances a couple times to the love birds in the back seat but for the most part his gaze is drawn to Steve.

Steve feels a little bad, dragging Billy into this. But then Billy dragged himself in by being a violent, childish, psycho. Steve thinks maybe he should tell Billy; give him the whole rundown of everything since the disappearance of Will Byers and Barb's death. But he remembers what Lucas said about telling Max, how that had gone over so poorly, and it took way too long for her to believe them and Max is a much more cooperative person than Billy. Which says a lot about the cooperation of Billy.

"You guys gonna tell me why you're talking like we're on the fucking Titanic?"

"Can't hear you," Steve shouts, "music is too loud."

Billy, unexpectedly, turns it down. "I said are we gonna drink kool aid and die or what?"

Steve thinks about Barb's death again, for just a moment, he thinks about the spin they put on it. Water it down.

"There's these huge rats," Steve explains, "they're all over the mall. They're gonna fumigate tomorrow but we wanted to get in and see them. Maybe kill a few."

Billy check the rear view for Jonathan and Nancy's faces. He shakes his head.

"Yeah fucking right," He laughs swerving into the mall. "Fine. Don't tell me. I'll find out." Steve wonders if he's ever been a good liar or if he's just

bad at lying to Billy.

Billy puts the car in park and they all get out. Steve hands the duffle bag with the bomb in it to Nancy. Billy is lighting another cigarette and Jonathan walks to the mall and starts smashing the glass. The whole door goes and Nancy steps in. Billy whistles and claps.

"You guys really are crazy," He laughs.

"You should stay out here," Steve suggests. "With the car."

"No fucking way. You guys just got interesting."

"He should come," Nancy calls from the window as she carefully steps through, Jonathan holding a hand out to her to help if she needs it. "In case he decides to take off without us. You got to keep an eye on him."

"Yeah, Harrington," Billy smacks him on the ass, "keep an eye on me." He's into the mall after Nancy and Steve, taking out his Nail Bat, is the last to go in.

Billy is walking around, climbing on shit he shouldn't, like he's wanted to run around an abandoned mall as his own personal playground his whole life. Nancy is all focus and mission oriented. She's heading for the stairs to the basement. Jonathan is after her but before they go down he stops and turns to Steve.

Nancy waits at the stairs for him.

Jonathan takes a deep breath and looks hard at Steve.

In the background, Steve hears Billy stop running around and he can feel him come a little closer.

Jonathan's voice echoes in the empty mall.

"Listen if we don't make it out of this-"

"Jonny don't-"

"No," He's firm, which Jonathan almost never is, so Steve let's him continue, "If I don't make it out I need you to-to take care of Will okay?"

He needs someone looking out for him. He's been through....enough."

Steve nods. "Yeah. Of course, man. But it's gonna be fine." Jonathan looks annoyed. Like that's not what he wants to hear right now. Like Steve's glass-half-full-thing is an obstacle he doesn't need right now. Steve sighs. "But if it's not fine. Sure. I'll look after him, and Mike, and-"

"No he needs more than that." Jonathan sighs and closes his eyes like he needs darkness to think about what to say next.

Billy is so close behind Steve, Steve can feel his smoke on the back of his neck.

"Will's different. You know? From most kids and like, our dad, he used to give him shit for it. I don't think Will even understands but he will one day and I need you to," a shaky breath and Steve thinks he's heard Billy stop breathing behind him, he's quiet, "to tell him he's fine. He's okay. There's nothing wrong with him, all right? He needs to know that there's nothing wrong with the way he is. Can you do that?" Jonathan opens his eyes now and looks dead into Steve's. Steve nods.

"Of course," He says simply.

Jonathan accepts this. He pats Steve on the shoulder, an intimate gesture of comradery, and heads to go down the stairs with Nancy. Nancy who, quickly but tightly, hugs Steve.

"We'll need fifteen minutes. Then we'll have ten to clear the blast. Okay?"

She pulls away and Steve nods.

She kisses his forehead. A gesture that's so infantilizing Steve wishes she hadn't done it. But she and Jonathan are gone now. Down the stairs and out of sight.

Steve turns around and looks at Billy who is spinning the crow bar lazily in his hand staring at him. He takes out another smoke and offers it to Steve.

"I feel like this is a smoke 'em if you got 'em, kind of situation?"

Steve takes the cigarette, because Billy is right.

*

Billy is starting to feel antsy. He doesn't like to feel antsy. So after only a minute and a half of sitting with a sulking Steve he gets up and smashes the Fire Axe glass. He knocks the rest of the glass away and pulls his prize out. Now he has two weapons to spin around in his hand and he looks at Steve to see if he's impressed.

"You don't want to like, shoplift or anything while we wait?"

"Knock yourself out," Steve mutters looking down the stairs.

Billy rolls his eyes. "If you don't entertain me I'll take my car and leave," he threatens and Steve is on his feet at that.

"Don't!"

"Then entertain me. Come on. Surely you came here to do something. You brought weapons and a duffle bag. Let's wreck some shit."

"Is that all you think about?" Steve stands, he gets into Billy's face shouting now. "You just think about wrecking shit? Getting your jollies punching kids slashing tires?"

Billy sees it wiggling in the darkness just behind Steve but he doesn't tense. He's curious, sure, but he's not stupid enough to lunge at it or let it know he sees it.

He puts an arm on Steve's shoulder, "Hey Harrington?" He locks eyes with Steve and more just feels the creature slowly descend from the ceiling. It's making a clicking noise Billy doesn't care for.

"What?" Steve snarls.

Billy grins.

"I prefer you on your knees."

He shoves Steve to the floor and slashes, a dead shot, into what is absolutely a giant, wet, otherworldly, spider.

It screeches, literally screechs, and writhes on his axe until it falls dead to the floor. Steve is looking at it with fear but not with surprise.

Billy realizes that this is because Steve recognizes this creature.

"Fuck!" He gets up, loots around in the duffle bag and pulls out a--no shit--flamethrower. Billy's eyes light up with delight.

"What's that for?"

"The horde," Steve presses his back to Billy and searches the room. "Get ready to wreck some shit, Hargrove."

Billy beams when a bunch--no--a swarm of these alien spiders descend on them from the ceiling.

Steve did not ever think he might die like this. Trapped in a mall fighting off some fucking John Carpenter horror bugs while his ex girlfriend and her new boyfriend planted a bomb on the queen in the basement.

After the night with the Demogorgon and learning about The Upside Down, that seemed a little more likely. But he certainly never thought he'd be doing it with Billy Hargrove.

*Who was--Steve looked back at him
Having fun*

Billy was whooping, like a goddamn cowboy smashing his stolen axe into one and bludgeoning another to death with his crow bar. He locked eyes with Steve and blew him a fucking kiss.

"Six!" He shouted.

"What?" Steve yelled back setting another three of the spiders on fire.

"I've killed six--" He stomped his boot down onto the head over another until grey goo spilled out, "Seven. What about you, Harrington?"

"I'm not keeping fucking count you asshole!"

"Come on!" He stabbed one through the torso with his crow bar and then smashed it into the glass window display of Claire's. "Have some fun!"

Steve's mouth was agape.

Billy licked his lips. "That's eight. Unless you think you can't beat me?"

"The fuck I can't," Steve growls rushing to the escalator where a few dozen of the things are rushing down. He's been doing this longer than Hargrove. Technically speaking he has two up on him already with the first Demogorgon and the mess of demodogs he fought that Fall. He turns the escalator on and several of the spiders are caught in the gears, they're dragged under, and then scream.

Billy howls, like a goddamn wolfman, before he punts another one of the spiders with his axe like he's playing golf. "Nine! Impressed pretty boy? Getting you hot?"

It is a little but Steve ignores him. He doesn't have time to dissect how creepy it is that this is Billy Hargrove's version of Disney Land and he definitely doesn't have time to process why that's so fucking hot.

Steve wrestles a Molotov cocktail out of the duffle bag, lights it, and tosses it, perfect shot, into the crowd of spiders climbing over their brethren's bodies to get at them down the escalator.

They light up like a Christmas tree, but not nearly as bright as Billy's face lights up.

"That's cheating," he laughs making his way over to Steve stomping spiders in his path. This guy has simply no fear whatsoever and Steve can't comprehend that. Even when he was at his bravest, fighting unimaginable hellish creatures, he was still fucking scared. "Gimme one of those," Billy demands snatching another cocktail out of the bag and lighting it with his cigarette lighter.

"Be care-"

He tosses it into The Gap and Steve thinks this is just Billy madness but as the cheap clothing goes up he hears the many screams of spiders he hadn't known were there.

"This is some awesome Stephen King shit man!" Billy shouts. Steve wants to respond to that but he can't.

Billy grabs him, hard, by the jaw, and pulls him in for a hard and rough kiss. Steve is still, save for some confusing action in his pants, and Billy shoves him away grinning with madness.

"Are there more?" He asks with glee, not waiting for an answer, just marching forward into the direction of the horde.

Steve would like to process what just happened.

He doesn't.

A spider drops, no web just launches, from the ceiling onto Billy and finally the guy elicits a scream that isn't 100% raw sexual excitement.

Steve slams the Nail Bat into it and it explodes on them. Billy falters and Steve rushes to catch him.

"Fuck!" Steve says looking at the bite mark on Billy's shoulder. "Don't panic."

"Panic?" Billy snarls, "my fucking coat is ruined Harrington!"

"Your priorities are super fucked up, you know that?"

There's a gunshot behind them. They look and Nancy's just deadshot killed another descending spider. She runs towards them shouting, "To the car!" She sweeps up the remaining duffle bag in one swoop and is past them.

Steve almost panics but then Jonathan comes into view shooting at something following them up the stairs. Steve reaches into Billy's jeans and, avoiding what is definitely a boner, grabs his car keys and tosses them at Jonathan as he rushes by. Jonathan calls to Nancy and tosses her the keys. She only fumbles a bit with them but then she's vanished out the door.

"Not my fucking car!" Billy yells and Steve just has to pull him out.

"Priorities I swear," Billy starts to feel heavier in his walking and Steve

knows it's the venom setting in. He's gotta burn that shit out quick but if they are blown up beforehand that won't matter. "Johnny help me!"

Without hesitation, because Jonathan could never hesitate to save someone, even an asshole like Billy Hargrove, he takes up Billy's other side and they rush him out of the mall.

Nancy swings wide with the camaro, making a screeching noise with the tires that makes Billy literally wince. No time to worry about that. Jonathan is climbing in and holding the back seat open for them.

"Wheeler is not driving my-"

Steve shoves Billy Hargrove into the back seat of his camaro using his entire body weight to pin him down there.

Jonathan gets the door. Nancy puts it into reverse and peels out of the parking lot. "How much time?" She frantically asks Jonathan.

"I don't know," he pants, "I dropped the stop watch."

She shifts it into another gear and Steve feels like he's never felt a car go so fast before.

"Is he hurt?" Jonathan asks looking down at Billy who is more subdued now holding his bleeding bite.

"He got bit," Steve is already working on getting the skin bare. He's straddling Hargrove, and with a knife he has in his handy-dandy-duffle-bag, he cuts his shirt off.

The Scorpions are still playing.

"Johnny," Steve says handing him the knife and he doesn't need to say more than that. Jonathan starts burning it, trying to keep it steady in the rocking camaro as Nancy careens towards the parking lot exit.

"What the fuck is that for?" Billy asks his anger keeping him awake.

The blade is white hot and Jonathan hands it back to Steve. "Bite down," Steve commands as he shoves one of his wrists into Billy's mouth and presses the blade to the wound.

Billy bites down like he's told. He screams. He breaks skin. Steve screams. Billy tastes blood and Steve can feel Billy's hard on pressing up into his ass.

Once it's down, once the bite is burned over and the knife has lost its' heat, they hear, feel, and smell the bomb explode behind them.

It crumbles the mall.

There are flames.

There's smoke high in the air.

And there's the unmistakable final scream of an entire species.

Nancy slows once they're on the road and Billy is panting hard around Steve's bleeding hand. Steve pulls his hand out and pats Billy's face.

"Still with us, pretty boy?"

Billy nods. He smiles, his pearly whites stained with Steve's blood. "That was something else," he laughs.

Steve has to laugh a little too. If only because Billy is insane. "You're something else." Steve is exhausted and if he weren't straddling Billy in the back of a car he might pass out. He kind of wants to pass out anyway.

"Got me good."

"Had to burn the poison out. These things, they usually hate fire and heat."

"Nice shooting, Wheeler," Billy huffs, "better than your driving."

"I can take over," Jonathan offers, "if you want, Nancy?"

She shakes her head.

Steve takes out some Iodine and bandages from his duffle bag and starts to clean Billy's burn up.

"So," Billy says, all bloody teeth, wild eyes, and enthusiasm, "What are we killing next weekend?"

With a look between the four of them and an absolute sense of dread they realize that Billy is serious.